

The rapid growth of an ageing population and the rising number of people affected by dementia, has brought on an urgent need for effective interventions in supporting dementia care, in particular in respect to one of the most important aspects in care home settings: **the provision of appropriate stimulation and activities** for people living with the condition.

In this context it is increasingly questioned what the **potential impact is of design on the quality of life and wellbeing of people with dementia**, as well as for their carers, and care workers.



Dr Anke Jakob Faculty of Art, Design & Architecture,
Kingston University London

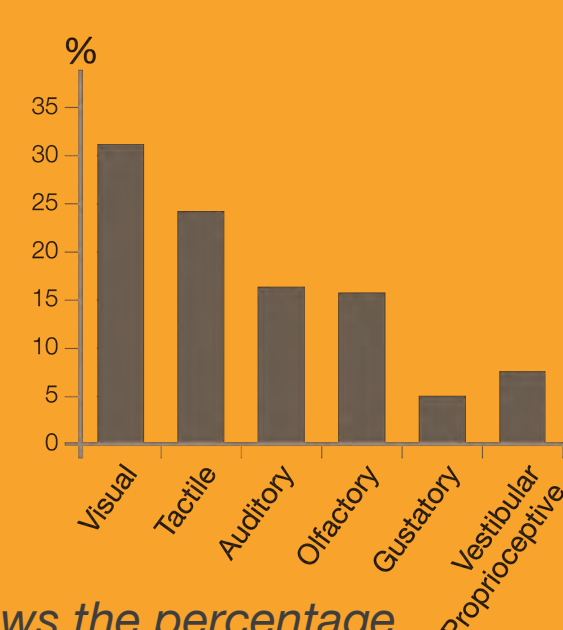
Dr Lesley Collier Faculty of Health Sciences,
University of Southampton

How to make a Sensory Room for people living with dementia – developing design guidance for multisensory stimulation in dementia care

The Study

A survey was conducted with 16 care homes within London and South UK participating, to examine and record the current use of Sensory Rooms, their design and the opinions of staff using these facilities. Data were collected using ethnographic methods incorporating semi-structured interviews with staff and observations of existing facilities and sensory sessions from the point of view of the person with dementia.

The results suggest that existing MSEs are mostly of inadequate design and set up, and facilitation by staff is poor. They often do not feature an appropriate range of equipment and items, the idea of multi-sensory stimulation is neglected as equipment available is focused predominantly on the visual sense.



The graph shows the percentage of the provision of stimulation for each sense.

Some of the spaces were perceived as very technical and 'cold' in appearance, or too dark; others were too over-whelming and juvenile in design.

comfortable



familiar



multi sensory

Based on the findings from the study, design criteria were identified that need to be considered when designing a multisensory space to **improve experience and accessibility** for people with dementia.

A **guide book with design recommendations** for setting up multisensory facilities in care homes was developed and published online. The guide titled *How to make a Sensory Room for people living with dementia* aims to be a tool for health care practitioners, care home staff and carers enabling them to facilitate **sensory spaces that are suitable and appropriate for residents with dementia** and their families.



Examples of Sensory Rooms visited with MSE equipment provided by suppliers: bubble column, disco ball, projector with themed image-wheel, coloured optic-fibres, CD player/sound system, waterbed and furniture with liquid resistant vinyl covering.

The Guide Book can be downloaded at:
kingston.ac.uk/sensoryroom

